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Pride of the Prairie events celebrate "homegrown" foods

Summary: Events are open to the public and highlight local foods and west central Minnesota producers.

(February 22, 2011)-The University of Minnesota, Morris will host its semiannual Pride of the Prairie Farmers Market and Community Foods Dinner on Tuesday, February 22, 2011. Both events are open to the public and highlight local foods and west central Minnesota producers.

“The Pride of the Prairie spring events celebrate Minnesota farmers who produce delicious, healthy, ‘home-grown’ foods for our communities and the campus,” says Sandy Olson-Loy, vice chancellor for student affairs and co-founder of the Pride of the Prairie initiative. “In the United States, most food on our plates travels an average of 1,500 miles. Our local markets and dinners feature great foods grown by our neighbors on the prairie and across Minnesota.”

Farmers Market

The Farmers Market will be held from 1 until 5 p.m. in the Student Center and will showcase area farmers and organizations dedicated to promoting local agriculture. The campus and community can learn about community-based food systems, visit with area producers, and purchase locally grown or produced products such as squash, apples, jams, jellies, baked goods, eggs, and meats.

The [Morris Healthy Eating](#) Initiative’s market booth will feature copies of the new Morris Community Food Assessment as well as resources for healthy foods. Morris Healthy Eating is working to make fresh, healthy foods more available and accessible in Morris and Stevens County.

Community Foods Dinner

Following the Farmers Market, the campus will host a delicious Community Foods Dinner. The menu, created by Dining Services and Sodexo, will feature ingredients and foods from many sustainable farmers from the area and across Minnesota. The dinner includes Minnesota greens salad bar with Amablu cheese herb vinaigrette and Angry Trout’s maple mustard dressing wheat berry salad Native Harvest wild rice soup carved roast beef apple squash bake roasted potatoes flax seed muffins pumpkin custard milk and apple cider. The menu includes a variety of vegetarian, vegan, and low-fat options. Dinner will be served from 4:45 until 7 p.m. in the Dining Hall, East Second Street, across from the Regional Fitness Center.

While dining, attendees at the Spring Community Foods Dinner will enjoy live music performed by “locally grown” musicians.

Minnesota farmers who will supply food and ingredients for the meal include Breezy Acres Gardens, Montevideo Faribault Dairy Company, Faribault 4F Farm, Hancock Freshmeister Foods, Morris Honey & Herbs, Benson Mages Gardens II, Willmar Native Harvest—White Earth Land Recovery Project, Callaway Pepin Heights Orchards, Lake City Pride of Main Street Dairy, Sauk Centre Ron’s Gourmet, Hollandale Simon Produce, Kerkhoven and Swany White Flour, Freeport Swenson Orchards, Montevideo and Thousand Hills Cattle Company, Cannon Falls.

Local foods offer economic benefits in addition to offering fresh, tasty foods and building community. West central Minnesota residents spend more than \$350 million buying food each year according to a 2005 study. Most of this food is purchased from outside the region. A farm survey showed nearly 300 of the 10,000 west central Minnesota farm families selling nearly \$1 million of foods directly to consumers. According to Ken Meter, Crossroads Resources Center, if only 15 percent of west central Minnesota residents' food was purchased directly from farmers in the region, this shift would create \$28 million in new local income.

Tickets to the Pride of the Prairie Spring Community Foods Dinner are \$12 for adults and \$6 for children age six and off-campus students. Children under five are free. On-campus students may use their meal plan. Tickets can be purchased either in advance at the Student Center Information Desk or at the door.

Parking is free in all campus lots. For more information, call 320-589-6013.

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